

MARKETS AND THE COMMUNITY

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market areas are the areas of effective, habitual relationship among farmers. They are definable only in terms of social relations made up of the acts of specific local persons. Such relations differ in duration and the frequency of the events making them up. Change such relations and geography is changed. For a human setting geography is merely the locus of relationship. The system of distribution that orders space in rural Ireland functions to do so within a system of social relations, which we have called familism. 438 484 571

It is not surprising that the relationships existing between the small farmers and their local distributing agencies go farther by far than economic acts of barter, purchase, and sale. The country crossroad shopkeepers, especially, win very special status in rural communities out of these relationships. In Ireland and in Clare shopkeeping is predominantly an urban and small-town trade. Yet shops are numerous and important in the country districts, and a word must be said of them. 444 571

In typical western rural communities the smallest and poorest of the crossroad shops, serving the minutest areas, are ordinary cottages or farmhouses. The slightest alteration has sufficed to turn one of the rooms into an emporium where makeshift till, counter, and shelves carry little more than tobacco, matches, oil, and a few sweets and small sundries. 444

Such a shop is usually run by a woman, who subsists upon it and a plot of land or garden. She is often a widow, or the wife of a local tradesman. In many cases the little shop is the local post office as well, and a salary from the state contributes to the owner's upkeep. Such a shop is sometimes, too, a local gathering place for the boys, in the way the local smithy once was such a gathering place. The boys get their fags here. It is incumbent upon the woman who keeps the shop to make them presents at Christmas time, in recognition of their custom. Everyone agrees that the woman [205] [431]

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444 subsists only because she is a part of the local community. Though she charges a bit more, she spares one the longer walk to the village center.

Country shops are often larger than hers. Sometimes where the distance to the village center is greater, they sell nearly everything one could get in town, outside the specialized drapers' or hardware, boot, and shoe shops. They sell all the farm staples, such as groceries, sugar, flour, tea, and tobacco. Here people may come from two or three miles around. The farmers all know they pay more, but the shop is a convenience. It may get the only newspaper in the district, and men drop in to hear the news. In the evenings a local school of cards may flourish here and the boys foregather.

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571] The country shop reaches its zenith at the crossroad, where a church, a parochial house, a school, and a creamery may stand as well. Here the shop often dates from the days just after the famine and has had a long history of prosperity. In the past generation many such crossroads produced county councillors, and the rewards of public service often meant the acquisition of several rich farms in addition to the shop. The shop serves the surrounding countryside and collects its produce, and it derives its reward from the service it performs.

441 The position of the country shopkeeper is to be found in
565 his place within the system of relations which make up the
571 community of small farmers behind his shop. His function as economic agent of distribution is only part of his role. He is in a situation which must be described as a perpetual seesaw. If he is drawn too far within the local community, he loses contact with the outside world. If he is drawn too far outward, he loses touch with his customers. He must maintain a balance in a delicate equilibrium.

He is caught within a pattern of mutual obligations to the farmers on the one hand and the social system of the

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Begging is practically unknown, and drunkenness, as a habit, does not exist, the sobriety being very noticeable on holidays, though occasional bouts of drinking are sometimes indulged in when a good take of fish has been made. They are very conscientious in their religious observances, and depend greatly on the advice and control of their clergy, with regard to temporal as well as spiritual affairs. Sexual irregularities are extremely rare, no case of illegitimacy having been recorded from the islands for years.

As fishermen they are brave, hardy, and extremely venturesome; this applies especially to the men of Inishshark, who are reputed in Bofin to be the best and most daring boatmen on the west coast.

Quarrels often occur, but a regular stand-up fight appears to be unknown, the men usually contenting themselves with abusive language, or at most a sudden blow or stone-throwing. A woman when angered may use very abusive language towards a man, as she would be practically safe from any fear of physical violence on his part, even when she was very provoking.

On the other hand, they are not without faults. In their ordinary life they are thriftless, and not too cleanly in many of their habits, and have but little regard for ordinary sanitary laws; their veracity, too, is not altogether unimpeachable, while the people of the mainland allege that they have a very strong aversion to the payment of debts, rent, and cess, for the last-named of which they owe over £1300.

The habits and manners of the people of Shark are much the same as those described above. The people are noted for their loyalty to one another; they never tell any stranger anything about their local affairs. They are kindly and civil to visitors, always crowding down to assist them on landing, but are said to be capable of acts of ferocity when roused.

5. *Folk-names*.—The following list of fifty-one surnames comprises all those now to be met with on the islands. Some of these names, however, are those of families not long established on the islands, while others, formerly common, as Gorham and Halligan, are now without representatives.

The Gorhams are still, to some extent, connected with Inishbofin, as one of them is proprietor of the only shop there worth the name, and in addition holds a farm, but he lives on the mainland, and manages them by deputy, only occasionally visiting the place himself. It is possible that, owing to the heavy emigration, other surnames may also have disappeared. In the list of surnames given in the

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There are three or four small shops, but only one has a regular counter, and it is also the only public-house on the islands. 444

There is no regular employment for labourers, but occasional work is paid for at the rate of 1s. 6d. a-day. 465

The women, besides attending to the ordinary domestic duties, help the men at field work, at seed time and harvest, and at drawing sea-weed for manure; they card, dye, and spin the wool for clothing, and in rough weather, when supplies from the mainland are short, grind oats or barley in the quern, either for the cattle or for domestic use. This is extremely hard work, and requires two women, one to work at the grinding, and the other to feed the grain from her apron. They also employ part of their time at quilting or knitting. The average annual money handling of a family is from £40 to £50. [434] 462

2. *Family Life and Customs*.—The children of a family, who are usually numerous, are sent to school when about four years of age, and at first attend regularly; but as they grow older their attendance is often very irregular, as they are liable to be kept at home by their parents to assist at field work in times of pressure. They are said to be very smart and intelligent, but their progress is interrupted and checked by this cause. At the age of fourteen or fifteen years, when they have reached the second stage of fifth class, they are taken from school, and then enter into the regular routine of household and farm work until they either marry or emigrate. They marry young, generally for purely family reasons, romance not entering into the case. Courtship as a regular institution does not exist; and if exceptional cases occur they must be rare; as for two young people of opposite sexes to be seen walking together is looked upon as being decidedly wrong. Matches are arranged by the parents from considerations of suitability of families, not, as in many other places, by money bargains. As soon as an arrangement is come to between the elders, usually before Shrove, the young man goes and asks the girl personally; if he be refused, which sometimes, though seldom, happens, he considers himself disgraced, and is often inconsolable. The marriages often take place without any rejoicings or social reunions, the young couple going quietly home after the ceremony is over. In some cases they set up house afresh on their own account, but if the bridegroom be the eldest son who usually inherits the parent's house, &c., the bride goes to live with his family. 871 584 585 591

Mr. Michael Lavelle, to whom I am indebted for much valuable information as to the customs and folk-lore of the people, informs me that he has heard that sometimes, on the occasion of a wedding, [115] 585

BROWNE—*Ethnography of the Mullet, Inishkea, & Portacloy.* 625

Dinner.—Tea and soda-bread, or fish and potatoes.

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Supper.—Fish and potatoes, with buttermilk as a beverage, or stirabout and milk.

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In the mountainous parts, potatoes and stirabout form, with tea and boxty, the larger part of the dietary. In this region also the poorer families do not usually take more than two meals a day during the winter months.

Butter, cheese, and eggs are but very little used, the eggs being exported, and in some remote parts sometimes bartered to the small dealers for tea, sugar, or tobacco, instead of being sold for money.

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In many parts a good deal of poteen is consumed, as illicit distilling, though much less common than formerly, still prevails to a considerable extent.

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4. *Clothing.*—When seen in their holiday dress the people appear to be well dressed, and almost over-clothed; but the everyday working-dress is, among the poorer part of the population, often of a very non-descript, not to say ragged, character.

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At first sight there does not seem to be much homespun worn, but on closer inspection a great deal of it appears to be still in use, but to be made up in modern style. It is usually dyed blue, but a good deal of it is a natural grey made by mixing black and white wool, and which, as it does not fade, is much in use. The costume of the men varies much; the old swallow-tailed coat with the metal buttons is now seldom seen, being replaced by more modern patterns. The trousers are either homespun or corduroy. Hats and caps of all shapes are worn; they are usually purchased in Belmullet from local shopkeepers who import them. Many of the men, on working days, wear shirts of a thick, white, homespun flannel.

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The men of Inishkea still retain a distinctive attire, their dress being composed of a navy-blue homespun, of which shirt, vest, and trousers are made; many wear a loose blouse or frock of the same material, which they prefer to "shop cloth," as they say it is warmer, wears longer, and stands sea water better; it is certainly more picturesque.

A great deal of second hand clothing is sold on fair days to the poorer class of people by "Cheap Jacks," who dispose of their wares by a sort of Dutch auction.

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The men wear boots in every-day dress, but the women and children do so only on Sundays, market-days, and holidays. It is a common custom for women going to market in Belmullet to walk barefooted, carrying their boots in their baskets until they reach the outskirts of

228 to collect one stone in an hour. Kelp
 [381] (seaweed) burning for iodine on the
 beaches was almost extinct by 1894.¹⁷

SETTLEMENT AND POPULATION

361 Of the 96 houses counted as inhabited,
 53 are in five hamlets and another six
 in a loose cluster near the harbor. There
 is no village as the term is commonly
 understood, though the main center is
 beside the harbor, where the inn occu-
 pies the one-time "big house" of the
 Allies family, with the church and the
 Post Office a short distance away. In
 all there are eight shops, none of which
 [444] is recognizable from the outside, as
 everyone knows them: one is attached
 to the inn, another to the Post Office,
 a third occupies a specially built room
 in a farmyard, and the rest are in front
 rooms of houses. All the houses except
 about six have land attached.

Is this nucleated settlement as such?

361 On the first Ordnance Survey map
 178 (1838) there were large clusters of houses
 621 and on the 1898 map the vast majority
 of the houses were in clusters. The
 redistribution of land and building of
 new houses has broken up many ham-
 lets or made new ones, for example in
 Knock townland (405 acres) where an
 old hamlet on a sandy site has been re-
 placed by a new one on drier ground by
 the shore, with 15 of the townland's
 17 houses. In Cloonamore (663 acres)
 361 eight houses are placed along the shore
 621 and eleven others scattered over the
 hillside; in Middlequarter (608 acres)
 there are eleven houses in the main
 hamlet, six beside the harbor and eleven
 others at various points beside the shore
 or on side roads; in Fawnmore (199
 acres) six houses out of sixteen are in a
 loosely defined hamlet; and in West-
 361 quarter (523 acres) nine houses out of

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

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624 partners to come to Inis Beag to confer with him, knowing that they were ill with
536 influenza, which resulted in a serious outbreak of the disease shortly afterward. A
[793] fire which broke out in a storage room next to the house of the king some months
[731] after the shipwreck was viewed by irate islanders as divine retribution for his
"greed and selfishness."

624 In Ireland, the term "gombeen" is used to demean the usurious shopkeeper,
• 444 but this word is directed against the king only by those who most dislike him, and
275 then to connote what they consider a combination of piety and avarice in his
behavior rather than his economic practices. His role as moral guardian, with fre-
quent instruction and reprimand as to manners and misdemeanors to men in the
pub and children visiting the shop, is deeply resented by many. He does not care
to have women make purchases in the shop, where they can observe men drinking
and be observed in turn, ostensibly on moral grounds; he urges that children do
the marketing instead, not for the convenience of their mothers, it is said, but
because he can overcharge and short-change them more easily. To dissuade women
from shopping, he reads out their lists and talks with them about family affairs in
a loud whisper, so that they have no privacy. The men complain not only of his
alleged practice of overcharging and short-changing them late at night when the
pub is overcrowded with "light headed" drinkers, but also of his criticizing their
actions in public, his frequent closing of the pub before midnight, and his refusal
to serve those whom he feels have "taken too much" or those about to attend a
party where more drinks will be proffered them.

624 Supporters of Fine Gael and Labour, among others, object to the manner in
664 which the king curries the favor of Fianna Fail representatives and campaigns for
666 the party. He is accused of using illegal tactics, such as haranguing voters outside
of the school as they enter to cast their ballots, in his endeavor to keep Fianna Fail
624 in power. A more serious charge related to this one is his opposition to change in
651 Inis Beag which might benefit the population as a whole, an opposition which
178 explains his support of political party and church—both conservative forces. It is
asserted that, just as the government wants to preserve the Gaelic language and
supposed Celtic virtues of the folk and the church their strength of belief and
morality and thus underwrite the *status quo*, the senior publican wants no changes
which might threaten his economic position and control over the lives of the
islanders. To this end, he is thought to use his influence with priests and poli-
ticians who are in a position to modify local conditions.

184 Absent from Inis Beag is the evening *cnaid* of old men, which plays such
573 a decisive role in the political and social life of villages on the mainland. It is a
887 clique of visitors who usually convene at a particular home, called the "old men's
house," to formulate local policies.

626 Much of the community's relation to the outer world is debated here and deter-
573 mined by the old men's agreement. . . . It is here that petitions for roads, for
relief work in winter, for extension of agricultural prize schemes, and all of the
"political" business of the county council and its committees originates on the side
of the local community. It is here too that the community reaches its unanimity in
party voting. . . . Here it is too that the community makes its appraisal of its
own members and those with whom it is in contact. And that appraisal tells
quite heavily in the behavior the community will adopt toward the person or